SR GOES TO THE MOVIES

The Creative Artist and the Cops

THERE is a certain grim irony in the fact that Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising*, a new half-hour *avant-garde* film, was yanked from the screen of a Los Angeles art theater a few weeks ago, while only a few days later the Ford Foundation named the same Mr. Anger as one of twelve recipients of a coveted fellowship for creative film making—the first of its kind in the United States. The Los Angeles police called the film obscene, but the Ford Foundation's judges mentioned it specifically as one of the titles contributing to his award. The irony is underscored by the fact that while Anger's work, which combines artistry and integrity, was suppressed and the theater's manager arrested, other theaters all over Los Angeles continue to grind through shoddy reels of bare-busted "nudie" films whose only integrity is their unflinching devotion to the dollar.

Perhaps in a sense *Scorpio Rising* is also a "nudie" film. It contains glimpses of male genitalia. But it is also a film about homosexuals—the wild, frightening kind who go roaring through the night in motorcycle gangs. There is no implication that Anger approves of all this, however. Indeed, by comparing them frequently with the film of the *Hitlerjunge* in Germany three decades ago, he seems to be saying just the opposite. But what is more apparent is his fascination with their rituals of dress—the thonged leather boots, the chain belts, the waist-protectors with their many straps, the inevitable black leather jackets—and with their ceremonies as they initiate a newcomer into their midst with a kind of black mass. All of this Anger sets forth with incredible and intoxicating intensity, and with a camera delicately attuned to each nuance of their shocking rites.

AND they *are* shocking. Not because they reveal that homosexuality exists. Hollywood had already prepared us for that with *Suddenly, Last Summer* and other major releases. What shocks is the awareness provided in each frame of the depth of the abyss that separates the homosexual from the rest of society. What shocks is the detailed documentation of a way of life (and an urge for death) that, to most of us, borders on the fantastic. It will probably be simple enough for the prosecution to prove, as it must be California law, that *Scorpio Rising* "goes substantially beyond customary limits of candor in the description of matters pertaining to sex or nudity."

But is it not the function of art to press beyond such "customary limits"? Must the artist confine himself to what another phrase in the California statute describes as "contemporary standards"—which, in films at least, is apt to mean whatever is commercially safe? How are we to extend the "limits of candor," how are we to alter "contemporary standards" if serious works, made with insight and sincerity, are to be banished from the screen? Obscenity, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder.

Fortunately, *Scorpio* may well be returned to public view—the limited, "adults only" public that is, ultimately, its proper audience—by still another clause in the California statute on obscenity. To condemn the film, the prosecution must prove that it is "utterly without redeeming social importance." By constructing a parallel—perhaps too insistently—between his black-jacketed young men on their high-powered steeds and the young Nazis of Hitler's Germany, Anger's film probes an increasingly malignant sector of our society. The rituals are similar, the tests of manhood identical. For them both, death alone is ennobling—not life, not art, not culture. *Scorpio Rising* makes it amply clear that its young author understands this and fears it. Apparently the Los Angeles police do not.

Meanwhile, a word of praise is due the Ford Foundation not merely for its courage in making an award to Anger and eleven other youthful talents, all of whose interests lie well outside the range of commercial film making as practiced in this country, but for instituting the award in the first place. Almost fifteen years ago the late Maya Deren organized the penniless Creative Film Foundation to provide, if not grants, at least recognition for a new generation of artists that had turned to the motion picture camera as a means of expression just as naturally as previous generations had turned to the brush, the chisel, or the typewriter. The Ford Foundation, with grants this year totaling $118,500, has begun to realize her dream. "Like grants-in-aid previously made to creative and performing artists, these fellowships are designed to provide new opportunities to film makers," said W. McNeil Lowry in announcing the awards. They may well prove a Pandora's Box for the foundation, but they are a long-overdue shot in the arm for the creative film maker in America. —ARTHUR KNIGHT.

Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich

A STUDY IN GREEN

There is a tint of green in each of the following definitions submitted by Howard J. Green of Los Angeles, California. The chromatic adjective is used either as part of a word or part of a phrase. Answers on page 86.

1. A fictional candidate for President of the United States in the first musical show to win the Pulitzer Prize (1932).
2. The novel upon which *Oklahoma!* was based.
3. A poisonous powder used as an insecticide and pigment.
4. A professional football team.
5. An inexperienced person, easily deceived.
6. An indication to go ahead.
7. A Danish possession; its capital is Gotthaab.
8. A United States political party which nominated James B. Weaver for President in 1880.
9. A place where actors may congregate backstage.
10. Ethan Allen's command in the American Revolution.
11. An old Irish patriotic song.
12. Pulitzer Prize play, 1930.
13. A famous Bohemian neighborhood in an Eastern American metropolis.
14. A talent for growing plants.
15. A classic romance of the Southern American tropics with a bird-girl as heroine.

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Letters to the Editor

Continued from page 33

can privilege of independently making a choice among candidates is being insidiously weakened by Broadcasting's frantic fetish of "firstism" . . . .

MRS. ARTHUR VAN ZEE.

Toledo, O.

The Process of Happiness

I WOULD GLADLY CONTINUE my subscription to *SR* merely to receive John Ciardi's column each month.

I was especially interested in, though not surprised by, his "Is Everybody Happy?" in the March 14 issue. What impressed me was the main thesis of the article—"Whatever else happiness may be, it is neither in having nor in being, but in becoming." . . . Is Mr. Ciardi by chance a fan of Heraclitus and/or Kierkegaard (or perhaps even Heidegger, Sartre, etc.)?

HOUSTON CRAIGHEAD, JR.

Waco, Tex.

Plain Talk

I AM NOT IN THE HABIT of writing letters to the editor, but Katharine Kuh's article "New York's Modern Merry-Go-Round" [*SR*, Mar. 21] was too fine to go unmentioned. How pleasant it is to find someone who will question the awesome policy decisions handed down by New York's fine museums in clear, straightforward language.

CAROLINE C. PIVEN.

New York, N.Y.

Ratings Rancor

AS GOODMAN ACE CHERISHES the ratingless "good old days" of Anna Q. Nilsson [*SR*, Mar. 7], so do I the rancorless, prewar Mister Ace of *Easy Aces*. With the help of his delightful wife, his easy-going wit kept radio audiences happy. His sponsor was happy, too, and enjoyed good ratings for years.

Therein lie both the irony and the fallacy in Ace's lament over those awful Nielsen ratings and those more awful TV networks. Bemoaning the baseless beheading of talent, he confuses the star with the vehicle. Were Tallulah's and Tennessee's talents a sure thing on Broadway? Is Judy, a great artist, *ipso facto* a great hour-long weekly variety show?

Then he ignores the first-rate shows that aren't getting any axe—Danny Kaye and *That Was the Week That Was* and Brinkley and *CBS Reports*, to name some—all with a good quota of talent, entertainment, intelligence, and sponsors, too.

Finally, Mr. Ace sadly channels his own talents into the customary oversimplified and always fashionable blast at the complex field of audience analysis. Neither networks' nor advertisers' meticulous market researchers are one-tenth as unhappy as Ace, the comedy writer. As for blaming a show's demise on a rating—come, now, Mr. Ace, do you blame a fever on your thermometer?

MURRY HARRIS.

New York, N.Y.

The Gallic Heresy

IF THE THOUGHTFUL and thought-provoking article "Watching de Gaulle" [*SR*, Feb. 22] is any indication, the addition of Henry Brandon to your magazine is most welcome.

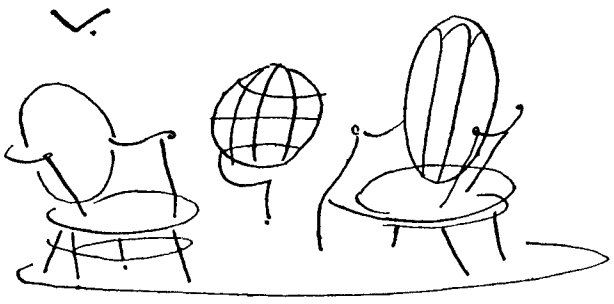
There is a recent fashion in governmental comments on de Gaulle and his policies to treat both as just short of heresy. This attitude is puzzling since, as Brandon points out, "only time will tell whether the American or General de Gaulle's view of history is correct." This point is seldom made. It is regrettable that Brandon does not amplify it.

Why, for instance, when we accept the concept of a "special relationship" between the U.S. and Britain (based primarily on a common Anglo-Saxon heritage), do we become alarmed when the General proposes a similar relationship between his country and Latin American countries based on the same sort of common denominator—in this case, a common Latin heritage? Isn't it logical to think that it might work? Especially since Latin Americans have for years complained of our policies on the grounds that we simply don't understand the Latin mind?

De Gaulle certainly has a right to his opinion, and he also has the right to translate it into a plan of action. It is, after all, possible that we have overaccustomed ourselves to the present-day world as a contest between two monolithic powers in which there can be only two legitimate viewpoints: ours and that of the USSR. The USSR demands rigid foreign policy compliance from its satellites and allies, but do we have the right to demand the same from our allies?

JOSEPH M. CONLON.

Teaneck, N.J.



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Library of Congress

Continued from page 24

gress is not bothered by the 324,000 printed but unfiled catalogue cards from World War II days that are still not placed in the file drawers in the annex so that readers can use them. It is unconcerned that the library has never fully restored hours of service in some divisions to the prewar standard.

Congressmen get prompt help on speeches and committee studies through the Legislative Reference Service of the library, but they do not know that all private scholars have been ousted from the study rooms built expressly for them in the Library Annex, and that the space has been taken over by government agencies, Congressional users, and the library's own staff.

Overcrowding within the library's main building (opened in 1897) and its annex (1939) has been critical for years, yet Congress has dawdled outrageously over making a serious start on constructing a third building. At best, it will take five years to get a new building into operation from the moment a decision is made to have one, and no such decision is yet in sight.

Long after the need for action had been obvious, Congress in July 1960 appropriated $75,000 to pay for a survey of the requirements for a third building. A report was delivered in August 1961, calling for a $71,000,000 structure with 1,520,000 square feet of net usable floor space in two blocks just east of the library annex. The library staff had been hoping to acquire a four-block area, to provide 2,000,000 square feet of net usable space. But they say now they will settle for the two blocks providing about 75 per cent of the needed floor space—if the library also gets, as the 1961 report recommended, a three-floor underground vault in a second site.

This other spot was added to the delay in 1960 when the late Speaker Sam Rayburn insisted that Congress take title to a built-up area south of the present library's main building. There was some talk of a James Madison memorial, but it was never openly explained just what the space was destined for. Congress took it over, merchants and residents were ousted, the buildings were razed—and then Rayburn died, taking his intentions with him. Today the House Public Works Committee is still considering, in no haste, whether to erect a James Madison memorial in Mr. Sam's square and whether to give the Library of Congress vault space beneath it. Another proposal has been to build the library's third building on this spot, to name it after James Madison, and thus to save money. In any event, the long overdue plan for relieving the overcrowded library now stands in line behind a decision on how to memorialize James Madison, who has been dead these 128 years.

Where does the fault for all this lie? Not in the Library of Congress staff, certainly, for they are highly skilled, dedicated professionals. Nor should the members of Congress serving on the committees responsible for the library be criticized too harshly; each in his own fashion pledges it support. The blame should be laid on the outmoded, faulty organization (or, one might say, lack of organization) in Congress on which the national library of the richest country on earth is uneasily based.

The present system is a nightmare of divided responsibility. The Library of Congress is supposed to receive its policy guidance from one Congressional committee whose members are mostly on it by accident and consider directing the library the least of their duties. It receives its operating funds from a second committee through a minor item in a Congressional housekeeping bill. And for a third building it has been awaiting the pleasure of a third committee, on public works, that is oriented toward federal highways, dams, harbors, and other projects in Congressmen's home districts.

The Librarian of Congress, while appointed by the President, is supposed to run the library under the policy direction of the Joint Committee on the Library, which Mumford has termed his "board of trustees." This group is made up of five Senators detailed from the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration and five Representatives from the Committee on House Administration. In their respective houses, both are minor committees.

These ten men and their staff assistants find running a library a bit of a nuisance and give it little time or thought. In most years it holds but one meeting, at which the chairmanship is passed alternately from a Senator to a House member and back again. It goes through a few perfunctory motions, then adjourns for a twelve-month. If its members even read Mumford's annual reports, there is no sign that they are inspired by them to give the library more attention.

This is not to condemn all of its members. Senator B. Everett Jordan of North Carolina, the 1964 chairman, is said to have taken a special interest in the library; his colleague, Senator Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island, took the initiative in 1962 to secure an outside evaluation of the library by Douglas W. Bryant of the Harvard University Library. But during the twelve years that Representative Omar Burleson of Texas has served on the committee and the ten years during which he has been alternately chairman and vice-chairman, his principal contribution seems to have been to praise the status quo and to counsel Mumford to "make haste slowly."

Whatever good intentions some of its members may have, the Joint Committee as currently set up just has not worked. Perhaps it is unfair to expect members of Congress assigned to the task in a backhand way to do a good job of it. If Congress were to select a library committee made up of members who actively seek service on it, there might be a genuine improvement. But at present there is a vacuum where there should be leadership and initiative.

If Library of Congress policy is set at all, it is determined by those activities for which Mumford can get the money. His budget request is presented yearly to five members of the House Appropriations Committee who draw up the Legislative Appropriations bill. This measure also includes money for the operation of Congress itself, for the Architect of the Capitol, who supervises buildings and grounds on the Hill, and for the Government Printing Office. The

"Let's leave intelligence out of this!"

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legislative subcommittee is one to which Appropriations Committee Chairman Clarence Cannon usually assigns low-seniority men who are waiting their turn for better things. The hearing records prove that the librarian and the architect must ring the alarm to get money for anything outside the routine.

To dramatize their urgent request for a complete overhaul of the library piping system in 1964 and 1965, the librarian and the architect told the House masters of the purse how sewage water had backed up from the basement toilets in the library, and how the sudden flooding of the Music Division during an August rainstorm damaged precious materials in the collections. Architect Stewart clinched his case by passing around cross-sections cut from the 1897 water pipes. They showed in almost nauseating detail the buildup of deposit that reduced their rate of flow to 25 per cent of original capacity.

Fortunately, there are signs in Washington that something will happen soon to bring about an improvement. A few members of Congress have been hearing lately from articulate constituents in the academic world about the crisis in our national library and are beginning to look into the situation. A network of librarians, writers, and scholars is being formed to show Congress that there can be votes in helping library-users. Before the death of President Kennedy there were plans in the White House for a high-level Presidential commission to study library problems on a national scale; this idea is being brought up now with the new Administration. And the Council on Library Resources, a creature of the Ford Foundation, has published a critical study of the role of federal government libraries in the national cultural complex.

There are, then, indications that something is going to change. The individual who feels concerned can help the process along by writing a few letters such as these:

1. To Senator B. Everett Jordan of North Carolina, chairman of the Joint Committee on the Library, urging support for the Presidential commission on national library problems.

2. To Representative Tom Steed of Oklahoma, chairman of the House Subcommittee on the Legislative Appropriation, supporting the full budget request of the library for the coming year.

3. To Representative Charles A. Buckley of New York, chairman of the House Public Works Committee, urging prompt approval of a fully adequate addition to the library, not entangled with a Madison Memorial.

4. To one's own Representative and Senators urging their support of these objectives.

Louisiana State Library at Baton Rouge—Even the librarians are astounded.

The Case of the Unknown Library

By JAMES F. FIXX

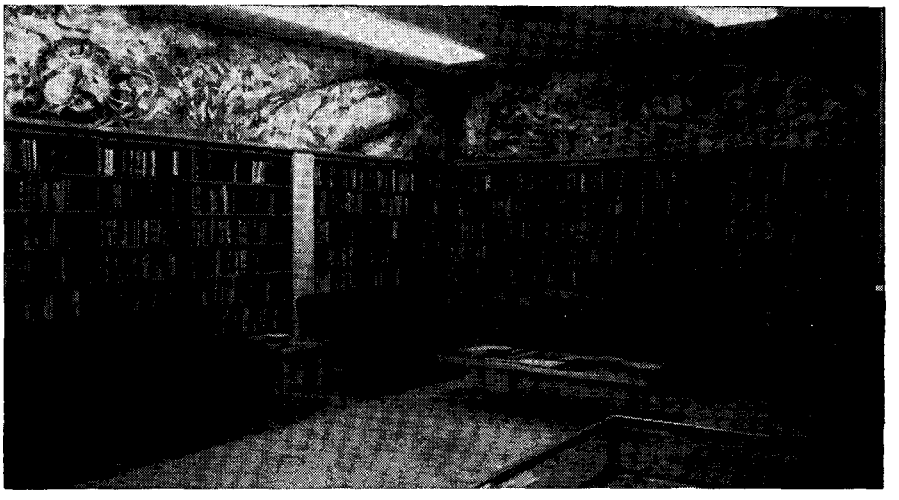
NOT LONG AGO a group of Miami Indians in Indiana filed a claim in a U.S. court. Arguing that in 1840 their ancestors had been underpaid for the sale of reservation lands, they asked the court to award them compensatory damages.

Although the sale had taken place over a century ago, investigators were able to turn to the archives of the Indiana State Library to find the reservation's original manuscript records, information on early nineteenth-century land values, and relevant data on agricultural productivity. All this, painstakingly gathered from aged volumes, was presented as evidence in court.

The Indians won their case.

This is only one example of the vast, if often unrecognized, value of a species of library that relatively few people are even aware of. This neglected species is the state library, which serves as a hub of reference for legislators, a storehouse of state records and history, a crossroads of elusive information, and, in many cases, the last resort when a fact can be unearthed nowhere else. Founded in the country's early years to guide state lawmakers, these libraries have long since outgrown their origins to provide services so diverse that even the librarians themselves are frequently astounded. "The best, most human, and funniest stories will never reach your ears," one librarian said recently. "Prudence and state law forbid it."

Nonetheless, the key role of state library systems was clearly underscored a few weeks ago when President Johnson



Washington State Library at Olympia—"a new and more significant role."

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